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ABSTRACT

A 5-month program conducted in Israel for persons active in early childhood education is described in this report. The program, designed to present an overall view of early childhood education, was tailored to the experience and background of participants. Lectures were devoted to such topics as child psychology, teaching methods, curriculum development, principles of supervision, teacher training, adult education, individual development within society, special education, natural science, nutrition, and consumer education. Visits to early childhood centers augmented many of the theoretical aspects of the curriculum and provided a means for applying theory to particular situations. Visits were also made to places of general and professional interest, including several institutes of higher education, the Ministry of Education, instructional support centers, the Educational Television Center, a comprehensive primary school, day care centers, a center concerned with preventive health care, and a center for services to disturbed children. Students submitted a final paper on a topic selected from a list of problems in social, emotional, and cognitive development, learning processes, behavior, and language acquisition. (Author/DB)

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REPORT

COURSE ON

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

5 October 1980 - 5 March 1981

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The MCTC staff gratefully acknowledges the cooperation extended to this course by educational and other institutions, government departments, local and regional councils, agricultural settlements, and organizations and individuals that offered their time, expertise and hospitality to the participants.

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* * *

STUDY PROGRAMME

INTRODUCTION

All the participants in the course were active in some aspect of Early Childhood Education in their own countries. The programme was therefore designed to present an overall view of that field, on a level commensurate with the educational background and practical experience of the members of the group.

The term was of five months' duration. Four months were devoted to lectures, group discussions and visits of professional interest in Haifa and the surrounding areas, which were correlated to the theoretical material that was being presented in the classroom. The last month was spent in a southern region, where field work exercises were carried out in a development town, supplemented by visits to a second development area and to a kibbutz.

Theoretical subjects were presented through lectures, with stress on the principle that application of theory to practice must be governed by adaptability to the needs of the particular community in question. Introduction to practical application of theory was effected through observation in kindergartens and visits to educational institutions.

Since no absolute analogy could be drawn between Israel's situation and those of other developing countries, much time was given to consideration of the value and possibilities of applying programmes that the participants saw, to the situations in their countries.

Child Psychology

A series of lectures on the subject of Child Psychology given bi-weekly, augmented by weekly tutorial sessions, formed the backbone of the course.

The importance of a thorough grounding in psychology as part of a teacher training curriculum has been generally accepted and encouraged by educationists. Most of the subjects taught during the entire course relied heavily on theories of psychology, its terminology and techniques. For this reason, a great deal of time was devoted to providing the students with a sound basis.

Trends in modern psychology and different aspects of personality and mental processes were dealt with in the study of the theories of Sigmund Freud (the emotional aspect), Jean Piaget (the cognitive aspect), and B.F. Skinner (the behavioural aspect).

The students were required to read extensively and this, while augmenting their knowledge, also facilitated participation in class discussions. Practical exercises were carried out during regular parallel visits to kindergartens, in which objective minute-by-minute observations were made of one child chosen by each student.

The students thus learned methods of objective observation of a child's behaviour, how to interpret their observations in the light of the theories studied, and the identification and application of the relevant theory to the particular situation they had seen. Case studies, drawn from the point of view of a given theory, were then presented in class.

The students were required to submit a final paper on a topic selected from a list that included problems of social and emotional development, cognitive development, learning processes, behavioural problems and language. An outline of the paper was presented orally in the presence of the group members, the lecturer, tutors and other staff members.

Pedagogy

A wide range of subjects relating to pedagogical considerations were dealt with in this series of lectures on the science, art and methods of teaching. While the theories of psychologists and of philosophers of education were presented and explored, the main focus was on application of theory to the actual teaching setting.

As in the teaching of child psychology, the practical aspects of the lectures were emphasized by concurrent observation visits to kindergartens. Thus there was constant feedback between the classroom at the Centre and the kindergartens, and questions which had arisen during the visits could be promptly discussed.

The participants' attention was directed to a number of concrete aspects, starting with the actual physical set-up of the kindergarten and its environment (location, sanitation, equipment, etc.), and going on to administration (hiring staff, organizing, administrating and supervising an efficiently run school). Several elements studied in the series on pedagogy were referred to in other lectures also, e.g. curriculum planning, language, art, music, and movement.

Much time was given to demonstrating didactic and athletic games, and to methods of improvisation and of copying Montessori materials. The study visits to early childhood education institutions - covered later in this report - were also reviewed during those class sessions.

Written assignments were geared to serve as an added practical reinforcement to theoretical content.

Visits to Pedagogical Centres

There are many Pedagogical Aid Centres staffed by highly experienced people located throughout the country, each centre serving the schools in a particular area. Their purpose is to provide support and reinforcement to the teachers as well as ideas and materials. Periodically, group sessions in the form of seminars and workshops are held, at which the teachers can seek answers to their problems, exchange opinions and receive information.

The centres' libraries are equipped with books, manuals, pictures and VTR equipment (which may be used on the spot, or taken out on loan). They also store materials and suggest ideas for making didactic games, for which the advice of experts is available.

Such a centre was unknown to many of the participants, and they were eager to visit several of them, in different parts of the country, where they experimented with various types of equipment. A question all the participants asked was how to overcome such difficulties as lack of budget, building space and personnel in creating similar centres in their countries. In most cases the advice given was the same - to start slowly by first establishing a centre within

a convenient school and using its facilities. If it is intended to serve other schools in the area, then materials, funds and personnel could be contributed by all the schools involved. Once such a project was initiated it would gather momentum, and aid could then be sought from government offices.

From the evaluation forms filled in by the participants at the end of the course it was apparent that most of them were convinced that establishment of such centres should be an essential project towards furthering early childhood education in their countries.

Curriculum Development

Since Freud first propounded his theories on the subject of children, the general attitude towards the child has undergone a dramatic change in very many parts of the world.

Today the science of psychology continues this pursuit of research into the numerous aspects of mental development in children, and their findings have had a remarkable influence on the education of the child - from birth.

In lectures on curriculum development, the participants were exposed to philosophies of education and theories of learning, propounded by Dewey, Brunner, Skinner. They learned to apply those theories to specific subjects, to analyse the structures of knowledge in each subject (e.g. reading, maths, readiness), and to determine educational objectives based on their knowledge of the different theories.

For the practical assignments that were to be carried out during their field visits, the students were required to observe the methods used for the introduction of different subjects into the curriculum, and to plan a complete curriculum according to one of the learning theories they had studied. These assignments were subsequently presented in class for thorough discussion. Possibilities for application of the western ideas to the very different conditions existing in the participants' countries provoked a stimulating and helpful exchange of opinions. There was also questioning of the desirability of such transfer.

Principles of Supervision

The idea of an autonomous 'supervisor' who is responsible for a certain number of teachers, was new for some of the participants since in their countries the person to whom the the teacher is responsible may be the principal of the school or an official from the Ministry of Education.

This prompted an initial questioning of the purpose of the lectures on that subject. However the point was quickly cleared up and it was agreed that the problem was basically one of semantics. Subsequently, many points which clarified for the students other aspects of relationships in the world of teaching were raised and discussed. This was particularly helpful to the participants for whom the encounter with the principles of supervision was altogether new, and also to those who were already in positions of authority, or expected to be promoted to such positions.

In education, generally, the 'client' is the child. But the supervisor is only indirectly concerned with the child, and it is the teacher who is the supervisor's 'client'. The

supervisor's main role is to help the teacher teach more effectively. With the young teacher the supervisor acts as the link to the Training College. As for the more experienced teacher, the supervisor may bring her up to date with new ideas, help her change her methods.

To be able to perform these functions successfully, the good supervisor must have been a good teacher. The converse, however, is not necessarily true. Among the subjects discussed were the attributes that are essential for a good supervisor, her/his duties and responsibilities to the teacher, the parents and the community as a whole; methodology and techniques (such as ego counselling) that are necessary not only for supervisors but also for teachers who deal with people on a one-to-one basis. The lectures served to further understanding of the questions of responsibility and support.

Teacher Training

Two lectures were given on the subject of teacher training, by a staff member of a Teacher Training College, and her lectures were based on the procedure in that institute. From information gathered subsequently, during visits to other teachers colleges, the participants were able to compare and learned that generally the curricula and training were similar throughout the country. The discussions introduced subjects such as selection of students for training, and the different programmes offered, including details of the theoretical and the practical aspects of preparatory education for training.

Information was given on the nature and the trends in research work being done on the subject of Early Childhood Education, all over the world. In order to introduce changes into education, old and new methods are constantly being tested by experts, and decisions are taken in the light of their findings. The lecturers concentrated on the implementation of the results of research done in Israel, and on the long and short term effects of such implementation. They also stressed the importance for the planning of the curricula of teacher training colleges and kindergartens and for the educational system in general, that the planners keep abreast of the research done.

Group Dynamics

The basic grounding in theories of psychology was important in the study of group dynamics, both for the insight it provided into the mental processes of individuals, and for better comprehension of how individuals interact in groups.

Each individual belongs to many groups, some of them overlapping and others conflicting. These groups may be small (a family) or very large (community), each having its own structure, norms, forms of communication, conflicts within and between the groups and problems of leadership and decision-making. Through games, role-play and discussions the participants came to realize that to deal with groups requires knowledge, tact, skill, and understanding. Stress was laid on practical application by the participants of the knowledge that they were acquiring. Much of the discussions centred on actual situations in their countries, the kinds of groups they would be likely to deal with, and on how groups could be formed and activated in order to bring about desired changes.

Some of these situations were simulated in games and role-play. The nature of the problems raised was familiar to the students permitting them to identify with their roles, and engage in lively argument. Their thorough analysis of the dynamics involved helped that participants to anticipate problems they will be likely to encounter later, in their work, and to consider the tools and methods for dealing with them.

Their daily life at the Centre provided the lecturer and students with a working example of group living; guided sessions in group dynamics served to make everyone acutely aware of the dynamics elements that existed within their own quite special and heterogeneous group.

Community Development

Individuals and groups belong to a community whose boundaries, to a large extent, may be defined physically, economically or ethnically. In order to be able to attain the primary goal of better education for the children of the community, it is essential for the kindergarten teacher to know the character of the community with which she/he is dealing, to be familiar with its geography, points of communal interest, its leaders, influential personalities, the power structure and the inter-relationships within the community.

Exercises in observation and getting to know the environment were carried out in the vicinity of MCTC. Goals for furthering early childhood education in the community (e.g. funding, better teacher training, parent involvement, etc.) were stated, and the participants were introduced to professional techniques for attaining such goals.

It is far easier to anticipate and think through problems which might occur, by attempting to simulate a situation and imagine the possible reactions of the people involved. If such reactions are discussed from as many points of view as possible, it serves the purpose of arming the community worker with pre-knowledge and with empathy.

For that reason, as in group dynamics, role-play and dramatisations of a number of situations were given special emphasis.

Art as an Educational Tool

From the time their coordination is sufficiently developed to hold a brush or a pencil, most children love to engage in art work, in any form. After much research in this subject for many years, it is now generally accepted among educators that observation of children's works in different art media can be of tremendous help to teachers, since they tend to reflect and express aspects of the child's total development. The participants were introduced to several methods of using art for furthering this development, and for understanding the child through his work.

For many educators the goal for art education is the use of the creative process to encourage and foster the child's potential for creativity, regardless of where this creativity will subsequently be applied.

In this course the students participated in an art workshop, where they worked alongside children. Thus they had an opportunity to see some of the methods discussed in the classroom put into action.

At a visit to the Haifa Museum of Modern Art the participants were told of types of activities on art appreciation offered to children by the Museum. They watched a teacher working with a group of children, using physical movements to help them identify with and understand abstract art.

Adult Education

The three lectures on adult education were geared to make participants aware of the fact that a large section of any community consists of adults who already are, or who will be, parents of young children, and that therefore the extent to which the adults were educated would have a vital influence on their attitude to, and participation in the education of children.

This view was a central point in the broad introduction to the subject of adult education, in the context of courses on early childhood education.

Growth Development in a Changing Society

The general subject of the lectures in this section was "The Individual in a Changing Society". The first talks were devoted to a description of society in terms of types of symbolic systems or cultures, types of interaction, and types of social structures. It was pointed out that the boundaries of society are neither fixed nor permanent, varying as different criteria are recruited to define society and its organization.

Societies may be classified according to their chief mode of subsistence, according to their social systems, or according to their organizations. Each mode of classification

implies a different reading of history, a different interpretation of current problems, and a view of the individual and of his potential contribution to the general society.

For educationists, it is important to undertand how the developing individual can change. The theories of Piaget, Freud, and Erikson provide guidelines for decisions on education. As working theories, they point out the ways in which curriculum materials, classroom climate, and didactic methods can be shaped to the inherent trends of individual development.

A working theory of education must derive from our understanding of social change and of personality formation.

Creative Drama

Most of the participants had a knowledge of, and some experience in formal drama, but creative drama in education was a new field for everyone to explore.

During the presentation of this subject introduced in the form of a series of workshops, the group, by active participation, learned and experienced the difference between formal drama and creative drama and the contribution of each towards the development of the child. In each session there was a gradual clarification of theory, ideas and practice, by means of games and techniques that could be used in teaching and motivating children.

In creative drama the approach to the child is to relate to him in his totality, as a unique personality, possessing inherent sensory, emotional and intellectual resources. The workshops therefore included drama games and exercises to break down psychological barriers, movement games to help

children to ahieve greater control of their bodies and emotions; games devised to develop verbal expression for the flow of speech and powers of communication.

The statement by Kierkegaard* that: "What feeling, knowledge or will man has depends, in the last resort, upon what imagination he has" was discussed in relation to the early stages of a child's development. It was agreed that the role and the responsibility of the teacher was to develop, stimulate and enrich the child's imagination. Numerous games and techniques to further such development were analysed and tried.

Sessions were devoted to the role of stories, legends and folklore in education - how to tell stories, how to dramatise them - not for performance, but for pure enjoyment and for teaching values - using them to widen the child's horizons and teach good behaviour without preaching. There were also suggestions on how to get children to create their own stories and poems.

The social aspect of drama was an important subject in the workshops - helping children to become part of a social group, letting them experiment with simulations of life experiences and to learn to deal with them.

Participants agreed that the subject of creative drama had equipped them with teaching tools which were indeed relevant to their countries.

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* 19th Century Danish philosopher, regarded as the founder of existentialist philosophy.

Music

Most children enjoy music. For many years it has been considered important to teach music in some form or other as part of the kindergarten curriculum, to develop children's awareness and appreciation. However, it is now held that this approach to music is insufficient. Children must be guided in the discovery of sound by enhancing their awareness of the sounds in their environment and sounds relating to their prevailing reality, (rain, wind, dishes being cleared, traffic sounds and so forth).

Once a basic awareness has been achieved, the children can be taught to create sound by using their voices and bodies as instruments, and by making instruments from objects and materials to be found in their environment. Sounds thus created can be explored and exploited in order to teach different musical elements (e.g. intensity, tempo, rhythm, pitch, expression).

Sounds can be written graphically so that the children can see how they 'look' and thus can be introduced to the concept of reading and writing music and creating a score.

Demonstrations were given of some methods, games and techniques for developing rhythm, memory, creativity, concentration, and awareness through what was termed 'free sound', and the students participated eagerly in the exercises. More familiar methods of teaching structured music (e.g. roup songs) were also used but it was learned that even here there was room for much improvisation and creativity.

Handicrafts

All children respond to and need attractive and colourful surroundings and toys to play with. This is particularly true in impoverished areas, where families are unlikely to be able to provide for these needs. In such areas, kindergarten budgets are usually seriously restricted, as well, and to buy the necessary materials in shops is expensive.

Therefore, the primary purpose of the section on handicraft was to show the participants easy techniques for toy making and for producing decorations for the kindergarten by utilizing scrap materials.

Although the emphasis was neither on making didactic materials, nor on teaching art techniques to be used with children, it occurred to the participants that because of the simplicity of the ideas, and the general availability of the materials used, many of the articles they produced could easily be made by children themselves.

Another consideration was that parents in the poorer areas do not have the money, time or motivation to invest in making the home surroundings attractive for the child. The teacher therefore needs to be equipped with a fund of ideas that can be quickly and successfully carried out and that would attract the parents to take part in the making of such objects, both for the home and the kindergarten, and encourage further efforts.

The participants had the opportunity to judge the effectiveness of their work by decorating the Centre for the Christmas festivities. In the kindergartens also, they helped to prepare decorations for the Jewish Festival of Hanukka.

Natural Science

A major premise in this series was that learning in general, and learning science, especially, can be fun. The educational methodology of the science series was 'learning by doing'. Ample opportunity was given to the participants to verify these premises for themselves, and their eagerness in the classroom, and in their preparation of assignments, proved that the points were well taken.

The scientific experiments carried out in class were chosen to illustrate several fundamental teaching objectives which are basic for learning any subject, not only science, e.g. formulation of hypotheses; universal statements and theories; concept formation. Different teaching models which illustrate alternative methods of instruction through 'learning by doing' were demonstrated. One of these models (Hilda Taba) relies on the inductive method of concept formation while others tend towards the deductive method. In both types categorization and labelling are necessary which may cause some difficulties, where overlapping attributes exist in the given data.

The lecturer demonstrated a diagram (VENN) which aids in this process and thus facilitates the problem of teaching concepts to children. Although highly sophisticated in its conception, this diagram is easily adaptable for use, even in the kindergarten.

The class experiments served the attempt to answer the questions 'what is science?', 'how do I teach it?' and 'how do I make it to be fun?', to convey more general and far reaching ideas such as theory verification or refutation and the implications of each. They also served to illustrate application of the scientific method to the teaching of any subject.

Health and Hygiene

Health is a community responsibility and depends to a great extent on the community's awareness of its obligation in this sphere, and also on its cooperation. "A healthy community will produce healthy children".

Guarding community health depends largely on adequate preventive measures. Teachers are well placed in the community to take an active part in helping to develop public awareness, and to impart information on hygiene, good nutrition and prevention of disease.

The participants discussed modes of transmission and methods of prevention of infectious diseases. The necessity for adequate services to promote mother and child care, and public health, was stressed by the lecturer.

The class also reviewed the common causes of accidents in the school, its surroundings, and in the home. The responsibility of the teacher for 'accident-proof' arrangements of the kindergarten and its equipment was acknowledged.

The field visits connected with these lectures included several health services and institutions, to observe the kind of services that were available to the community, and how they were conducted. Among these the group went to a Family Health Centre, one of the many located in all urban and rural neighbourhoods of Israel and supervised by the Ministry of Health. This Centre is responsible for preventive health for all members of the family, giving special care to pregnant and nursing mothers, babies and school children, and after-care to the chronically sick.

Nutrition

The focus in this subject was on the importance of good nutrition in the life of the individual and of the community. 'Sufficient' food is not enough to ensure good health and mental and physical alertness, if essential nutrients are lacking. The basic elements of a balanced diet were therefore enumerated and analyzed, and the means by which it could be achieved were discussed.

Often the fact that foods containing the necessary nutrients are usually both cheap, and available, goes unrecognized; there is also the fact that people do not possess the knowledge needed to combine those foods so as to obtain a good and balanced diet, with only a small amount of more expensive foods added.

The participants were offered advice and techniques on how to promote knowledge about good nutrition in their countries. As teachers, they have access to a large section of their community, and can therefore take steps to share their knowledge, particularly parents of the children in their schools. In cases where the schools provide meals, they can help to establish balanced menus, taking into account the needs of the child.

In an exercise, each student was asked to prepare a week's menu for a kindergarten school, adapted to conditions in their countries. In this way, by planning a balanced diet appropriate to the ages of children and the available budget, and utilizing indigenous foodstuffs, the participants were able to gain a better understanding of the subject.

Consumer Education

Two lectures were given on this subject. The first dealt with general national economics - government services, taxes, gross national product, etc. - to give the participants a broad outlook of the financing of national services, including education. The second was geared to equip the participants with enough knowledge to be able to prepare a budget for their own kindergartens. This session included recording cash receipts and payments; stock records, etc.

A third lecture was given by a guest lecturer from India, Prof. Kumud Pore. Here economic aspects of Early Childhood Education were discussed.

Observation in Kindergartens

The participants were divided into groups of two or three for the weekly visits to kindergartens, which continued throughout the term. Each group visited the same kindergarten each week for the first two months, then the groups were rotated. This gave the participants the opportunity to get to know two different kindergartens, often geared to different age groups.

After the initial excitement created among the children by such 'different' visitors to their kindergartens, the participants soon blended into the kindergarten scene, and took part in the activities of the class. Despite obvious language problems they immediately established rapport and communication with teachers and children alike. At first this was done with the help of the tutors, who were always present during the visits, but later they discovered excellent methods of non-verbal communication of their own.

The students were invited to celebrations of festivals which occurred during their stay. They helped the teacher and the parents to decorate the kindergartens, and they learned Hebrew songs to be able to sing together with the children.

On other occasions they told the children a little about their own countries and taught them songs in different languages. Close ties were formed, and many of the participants wre invited to visit the homes of the kindergarten teachers.

There were many opportunities for feedback on these visits, either in sessions set aside for this purpose, or in the written assignments presented to the lecturers that dealt with specific aspects based on observation, and related to theories studied in the classroom.

Special Education

The subject of special education was given emphasis during the last of the four months spent at MCTC. The lecturer defined 'exceptional' children as those who deviate from the average in physical, mental, emotional or social characteristics to such an extent that they need special help in order to adjust and to develop to their maximum capacity.

In a considerable number of the industrialized countries, Special Education is a separate branch of the educational system, and is the domain of experts trained to deal with its manifold aspects. Where such systems operate, health and education services are geared to spotting the exceptional child from birth, and referring her/him to the specialists whose competence it is to deal with the specific problems, within the existing frameworks. It was found that early detection is extemely important for subsequent success. However, in many countries such systems do not exist as yet and therefore the 'exceptional' children are often unrecognized and/or unaided.

In many instances children with severe cases of mental, physical or emotional handicap are kept at home, but on the whole, wherever possible, the children are absorbed into the general education system, and the teacher has to deal with them within the framework of the regular classroom.

Where no provision is made for gifted children who according to the definition given, are also 'exceptional' and in need of special attention, their talents which may be vitally important to society, are likely to be unrecognized.

While it is becoming more and more accepted that every child has a right to opportunities to develop to her/his maximal potential, and this right has been reinforced by UN declarations, the funds to provide for and further such opportunities may not be available. Here the classroom teacher will be called upon to help.

It was the purpose of this series to elaborate on this subject broadly and in detail, so as to acquaint the teacher-student group with the many facets of 'special education', and with the developments in this field in different parts of the world.

During the lectures different types of handicaps were defined and classified. Stages in the education of exceptional children, from early detection to the possibilities of integration into the world of adults, were examined. The advantages of the optimal integration of the child into the environment and the necessity for teachers to work with the family and support it, as well as involving the community, were repeatedly stressed.

Correlated with those lectures were visits to a variety of schools, homes and institutions, each dealing with different types of problems. The participants talked with psychologists, social workers and educators assigned to special education. The need for a network of services to deal specifically with exceptional children was advocated by them, but it was again impressed on the participants that also the teacher in the classroom can do much to help those children cope with their environment.

V I S I T S

The visits made by the participants can be divided into two categories: a) visits to supplement their studies; b) visits to places of general interest.

The visits of professional interest correlated theory learned in the classroom with practice, as seen in the field, and gave the participants a broad view of the different systems and facilities for early childhood that exist in Israel.

For this purpose, visits were arranged to a variety of institutions, ranging from the institutes of higher learning - universities and teacher training colleges - to schools, kindergartens and health centres where practical work with children is carried out.

The University of Haifa

With this University there was a closer contact than with other educational institutions, because of its advisory role in the Mount Carmel Centre and because of the part it plays in furthering the progress and integration of developing communities. The participants used some of the university's facilities and its library. They also viewed its films on early childhood education.

Science Teaching

As a result of the lectures at MCTC on Natural Science, the course was especially interested in attending a session at the Tel Aviv University, where they heard about the MATAL programme of how to teach science to very young children.

This research-based programme was created at the Tel Aviv University in conjunction with the Israel Centre for Science Teaching and the Ministry of Education. It was designed to

help the kindergarten teacher guide the young child to a specific mode of enquiry so that he/she would be better equipped to understand the basic processes of science. This is done with the aid of manuals, work sheets and didactic games, all produced by the university.

Teacher Training Colleges (see p.7)

These Colleges work in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, which sets the curriculum for the schools.

However, their philosophy of education may be different, (e.g. for ideological or religious reasons) and prospective teachers may choose the college they wish to attend according to their personal views. At the Oranim T.T.C., attended mainly by kibbutz members, the participants saw an experimental kindergarten in which children from different localities attended once a week. At the same college the participants had an interesting experience, when they attended a geography lesson.. The subject was, by chance, the great rift valley, which stretches through Africa to the Middle East and Israel. After the lesson, the participants commented that the discovery of this physical manifestation shared by a number of countries had dramatically broadened their horizons.

The Ministry of Education in Tel Aviv - Here the participants were received by the head supervisor for E.C.E., Dr. Nehama Nir-Yaniv. She outlined four goals of E.C.E. she considered to be the principal goals by which the curricula for both training colleges and kindergartens were designed:

- individualization of education - stress is placed on strenthening the individual
- integration - where the aim is to strengthen society.
- involvement of parents - in order to strengthen the family
- professional development of the teachers - this strengthens the whole educational system

Pedagogical Centres (see p.4-5)

Educational Television Centre, Ramat Aviv

The participants were very interested in the many and varied daily education T.V. programmes for children which they viewed on the set at this Centre. Most of the programmes are in Hebrew, therefore, obviously the participants could not understand them fully. However, they were able to gain an impression of the prevailing high standard of the programmes and to appreciate the attention given to subject matter and detail, which is of primary importance in programmes prepared for a very young audience. A visit was also arranged to the Educational T.V. Studios, and many points of significance regarding the principles underlying the making of different types of programmes were explained. After this visit, the participants were able to watch the educational programmes with greater understanding and enjoyment, and make note of ideas for possible use in their work.

A Comprehensive Primary School

The school visited serves children from kindergarten until they graduate to Junior High School. The advantage of this system is that difficulties which children often encounter in the transition from kindergarten to first grade are partially overcome.

The school has a special class for exceptional children, but the advantage is that it is within the framework of an ordinary school. The other pupils become used to having among them children who are different, and accept them.

The idea of making full use of school buildings and their facilities for extracurricular activities after school hours, for both children and adults, was discussed during this visit and received with approval by the participants as a valuable idea.

Day Care Centres

The centres to which the participants went specialized in care for the children of working mothers, or children from problematic homes. In the latter, if the family income is low, the care of the child is subsidized. Once again, importance is given to integration of such children with others from regular homes. Many of these centres were started, and are run, by women's voluntary organizations.

The Child Development Centre, under the auspices of Israel's Ministry of Health, is an example of a specialized service for disturbed children. A team of psychologists work with these children and their parents, either in special kindergartens or, when the child is able to cope, in regular learning frameworks. Visits to specialized kindergartens allowed participants to observe the interaction between the teachers and these children.

A second psychological centre visited was situated in a culturally and economically deprived area, and serves the residents of the community. The psychologist and therapists here work in close conjunction with a separate and adjacent centre for treatment of cognitive learning disabilities, and there children are given different kinds of individual therapy. Kindergarten teachers receive additional special training for their work with the culturally and emotionally deprived children who come to their schools.

The Family Health Centre was one of the many located in all urban and rural neighbourhoods of the country, and is supervised by the Ministry of Health. It is responsible for preventive health care of all the members of a family, giving special care to pregnant and nursing mothers, babies, and school children. It also provides after-care for the chronically sick.

The several institutions for the handicapped that the group went to included the Micha institute for deaf children, a school for multiple handicapped children; an institute for children suffering from cerebral palsy and muscular dystrophy; a social club for handicapped youth; and an institute for people who are so severely handicapped that they require constant care and attention.

SOCIAL EVENTS

The E.C.E. course was held concurrently with another course at the Centre, and there was much interaction. A joint social committee organized celebrations for festive occasions such as Christmas and the New Year, as well as for Israel's holidays and festivals that occurred during the term. Some parties were held together with the foreign students from the Ruppin Agricultural College near Netanya.

Other events which the students of both courses attended included a theatre performance by the Inbal Dance Group, and a reception held in their honour by the Mayor of Haifa at the Haifa Municipality. A social evening was enjoyed with members of the Haifa Soroptimist Club.

At the final party at MCTC, the groups performed in a full length play that was written by one of their members. This was well received by the guests, among whom were faculty lecturers, the MCTC staff, and families that had invited participants to their homes. In their evaluations, the participants made note of the hospitality and friendship that had been extended to them and expressed their warm appreciation.

The closing function was a formal luncheon and award of the certificates which took place in Jerusalem, on the campus of the Hebrew University, in the presence of Ambassadors and dignitaries from embassies of the participants' countries, and representatives of the Israel Association for International Cooperation.

The parting words to the participants were delivered by Mrs. Malka Bar Yoseph representing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who said:

> "I am not an expert in the field of education, nor in the field of early childhood education, but I know enough to understand and to recognize its importance. You know better than I how crucial it is for all societies, new nations, and old ones, to give children a good foundation so that they will be able, in later years, to cope with the demands of a rapidly changing society and also to contribute to their own nation, their neighbourhoods, and their families."

Excursions

Visits to sites of religious, historical and archaeological interest were arranged for the group, taking them to Western and Upper Galilee. The participants went sightseeing in Acre, Nazareth, and in the vicinity of the Sea of Galilee.

A highlight was a three day visit to Jerusalem during Christmas. In Old Jerusalem, their tour was of the ancient religious sites sacred to the Jewish, Christian and Moslem faiths.

On Christmas Eve, the participants were taken to Bethlehem to the midnight mass in the Church of the Nativity. In New Jerusalem, the group went to the Holocaust Memorial, to the Knesset (Parliament) and simply to enjoy walking through the city.

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F I E L D W O R K E X E R C I S E

conducted in

Kiryat Gat

Kibbutz Bror Hayil

Ofakim

F I E L D W O R K

In mid-February the participants left MCTC to begin a month's fieldwork in the southern region of Israel. They were accompanied by the course co-ordinator and two of their tutors. The venue for this exercise was the thriving development town called Kiryat Gat.

Development towns are of primary importance to the country, being focal points for the process of integration of communities into which there is a constant influx of new immigrants. During the 32 years of statehood, many social and economic experiments and programmes were planned, developed and activated in those towns. Some were discarded and replaced by others, but new projects are still being tried out. Thus the development towns are major recipients of the benefits of experimentation in which a great deal of human and financial resources are invested, and for that reason Kiryat Gat was selected as the base for the field work.

During the first three weeks, the participants commuted daily from Ashkelon, the coastal resort town where they lived, to Kiryat Gat. The last week was spent at a nearby kibbutz called Bror Hayil, where the participants were able to become more closely familiar with different facets of kibbutz life. The kibbutz is also a neighbour of Ofakim, another development town, which the participants visited for further observation.

The course was warmly welcomed to Kiryat Gat by the spokesman for the Municipality, Mr. Avi Shragai, who gave a short talk on the history of the area which was followed by a tour of the town, established in 1955.

Originally planned for 8,000 people, Kiryat Gat now has a population of 27,000 - mostly immigrants - from over 30 different countries. While their heritage of Judaism forms a common bond, each ethnic group brings with it the culture and some of the norms of its country of origin. The aim is "to unite and integrate the people towards one common goal and at the same time keep their own cultures." *

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* All the comments quoted are from the reports of the participants

From the day of their arrival the participants were kept aware of the fact that 1981 was the 25th anniversary of the founding of Kiryat Gat. In all the institutes they visited they saw pictures, slides and exhibitions to commemorate this occasion.

In the kindergartens and cultural enrichment centres they noticed that the central subject for study was the town, its history and its people. Through hearing about the different ethnic groups in their daily life children, proud of their own particular groups, were taught respect for the whole community. The pride of the people in their city impressed the participants and they all referred to it in their final papers.

Visits to Kindergartens

The participants were distributed among nine kindergartens, in the same groups of two or three established during their observations in Haifa. These visits took place on most mornings during their stay.

The general layout and curricula of kindergartens were similar to those observed in Haifa. However, the difference was that due to the composition of the population the participants found children from Eastern Europe, North Africa and Asia learning side by side.

What was not anticipated, and interesting, was that in outward appearance, the participants had a certain resemblance to the 'indigenous' population and, in the case of the Indians, they often found a common language. The children accepted them immediately, and a frequent question was "are you new immigrants?"

Many special programmes have been designed here to test the children and to give them individual help in subjects such as concept formation, reading, number readiness, etc. The participants learned that such help is offered in most of the kindergartens almost on a daily basis.

Assignment

For their practical work each team of participants was required to prepare a didactic game suited to the ages of the children. They observed the activities in the class and took note of the materials and games being used. Permission was gained to try out the games devised by the participants with small groups of children during their free play period, with an MCTC tutor present, to translate. The participants then observed how the children managed with the game and graded it (too easy, too difficult, etc.). A second game would then be made in accordance with these comments.

The games were prepared in the rooms at the hotel. The conditions for such an exercise were restricted, since the materials were limited. However, the educators are often faced with inadequate materials, lack of space or funds during their work, and so must learn to exercise imagination and ingenuity to create 'much out of little'. The teams set about the task with enthusiasm and some remarkably attractive games were produced involving numbers, matching objects, grouping, and classifying.

During the try-outs there was much interaction between the teacher-students and the children, and almost no intervention by the tutors was necessary.

A feedback session was held each evening. In most cases it was agreed that the children had had no difficulty in understanding the new games, and had thoroughly enjoyed playing with them. The participants were also asked to summarize their opinions of how their games benefitted the children. In the few cases where the games had proved too difficult, the participants prepared easier ones without changing the subjects, however. To the delight of the children, the visiting teachers presented all the games as gifts to the kindergartens.

In spite of the language barrier, excellent communication and strong bonds were established between the participants, the children and the teachers, and the parting on the last day of the visits was accompanied by songs, kisses and even tears.

The Field Work Programme included visits to many institutions, a number of which are described below:

Beit Edith Matnas Community Centre -"This is a place which gives both cultural and education services to the town..... it serves the children, youth, adults and elderly, to make them one community..... We saw happy looking old people who meet every afternoon and spend their time together playing table games and discussing different issues. Ballet lessons are offered for children and sports for youth. There are classes in ceramics and arts and crafts..... A second separate building houses the conservatory of music. It is part of the community centre, and 400 pupils learn music here."

The Pedagogical Centre - Three visits were made to the Kiryat Gat Pedagogical Centre. On the first visit the participants heard an introductory talk and were shown its facilities. They learned that this particular centre catered to kindergarten teachers, school teachers and tutors working in the field of non-formal education. It was to this last category of client that special attention was devoted. This centre's two-fold aim is to help the teachers create instructional programmes and aids suitable to their individual work, and to continue the enrichment of ideas and information they had received during training. On that occasion the participants also attended an inservice training session on music.

During the next two visits the group took part in role play exercises, using video tape equipment. The first exercise served "to prove to us that most of the time we, as adults, do not understand one another. It is therefore so much harder for children to understand us, and each other." In another activity, participants learned "how to deal with individual children according to their differences." In conclusion they viewed an exhibition and slides especially prepared for the current celebrations.

Although much impressed with the pedagogical institute, most participants agreed that a centre on such a scale was not feasible for their countries as yet. But it could be possible to set up small pedagogical centres in the schools themselves, "where teachers can carry out new teaching experiments, draw up programmes, have seminars, etc. For this not much monetary funding is needed - innovation is more necessary than money".

Imahut (Motherhood) Clinic - Children are brought to this well-baby clinic from birth to the age of two. During this period the programme is not structured. "The advisor talks with the mother about aspects of child rearing (diet, stimulation) according to the needs of the child, and the mother's experience and knowledge. On the table we saw bags made from waste materials, and also cloth dolls with embroidered eyes. This was instead of using buttons which the children would bite off and swallow. The advisor used these different toys to stimulate the children..... Much stress was placed on intellectual development."

The second part of the programme, for older children from ages 2-4, is structured. "The advisor visits the mothers at home and teaches them how to make games and books, and how to play with the children. These are the same children with whom the advisor had dealt at the clinic when they were younger, so there is a continuity."

Home Instruction for Preschool Youngsters - 'Hippy' Programme - This programme is a part of the Welfare Educational Project, for ages 4 to 6, and is addressed to the problems of school failures, and of integration of children of certain segments of the population.

The programme is based on the realization that the home is a very important contributor to the cognitive development of a child, and that the mother's role as educator is an essential one, regardless of how good the kindergartens may be. The mothers, however, felt that they did not possess the qualifications for teaching the child. The initiators of the programme concluded that it was necessary both to persuade the mothers and to help them succeeed as educators.

The participants saw this project in action. The instructors in this programme are themselves mothers chosen from among the community, and this gives easier access to the homes. Before they start working they are trained as para-professionals. In addition, during their work they continue to receive support and regular guidance from professionals. The mothers whom they are teaching receive booklets with exact, step-by-step instructions for daily activities.

The strict layout of the programme and the help of the instructor contribute to the mother's confidence, and give her a feeling that it is she who is actually teaching the child. Also, "close contact and the warmth of a maternal relationship give the child a sense of security while learning from the mother..... A key point in this is that all the members of the family will be aware that it was the mother who helped the child to achieve competence."

Small groups of participants accompanied the instructors into the different homes. "We observed the tutor while she worked with the mother..... They sat close to each other, and spoke in a friendly tone of voice. The tutor uses this contact as an example for mother and child interaction. The mother appeared to be extremely motivated..."

Yahel Cultural Enrichment Centre - "Children from each kindergarten came to this centre twice monthly for the enrichment programme which takes place in the mornings. Mothers are invited once a month in the afternoons, accompanied by their children, to receive instruction on how to work with their children at home, how to tell stories and how to teach them about their different cultures. The centre is geared to enrichment of literature and art. The books in the library may be borrowed, and there is advice for parents who are able to buy books. The teacher tells stories and afterwards the children listen through ear phones to the same stories recorded on tapes. The teachers also use puppets or a flannel board."

On the visit to the enrichment centre the subject of the story telling was Kiryat Gat. "There was an exhibition of objects brought by the citizens from their countries of origin, and a talk on different cultures, to which the children listened. The children and the mothers made puzzles using pictures of the town, and slides were shown depicting Kiryat Gat during stages of its growth. The participants also saw the children's art work."

For the mothers, the activities at this centre are extremely important. "This enrichment programme enables mothers to know and understand the children's school work better so as to help the child. The centre is also a place for the mothers to socialize."

On the next visit to the centre, "we also participated in activities with the mothers and children. We shared some of our culture with them and they did the same with us. We sang songs and danced to our music, and they did the same. Such activity helps to bring people closer together, it helps them to know each other and to be sensitive to each other's needs, so that they can help each other."

Visit to the "Torch" Elementary School

The Welfare Educational Project has introduced a special mathematics teaching programme into an elementary school in Kiryat Gat. "At this primary school there is a computer centre which children use for mathematics, once a week, for 40 minutes. The computers, leased to the school by the welfare education project, are also used by children from another school in the area." Emphasis is placed on integration through group work, and special classes for slow learners."

Here, too, there is an effort to involve parents, to interest them in their children's work and problems.

Neve Hannah Children's Home - "This is a home for children from families that are unable to bring them up (broken homes, alcoholism, drugs, etc.). 38 children live in the home, and go to different

schools in the town. The goal is to integrate them into the regular classrooms and to diminish the stigma of the problematic child. Close contact is maintained with the parents in order to help relationship with the child on a healthy basis."

Youth Club - "This is a dynamic club set up in a neighbourhood whose population is of mixed ethnic background. It is a hub of activities - drama, dance, art, etc. - where many aspects of those ethnic groups are forged to enrich the children's experiences. Secondary school pupils from kibbutzim come to the club and act as tutors to one child whom each 'adopts'. There are also social activities and talks on many topics. The Club has two tutors for 'borderline' youths. If necessary they refer them to the social worker."

"I would like to emphasize the impact on me of the general sense of dedication, enthusiasm and pride which most of the people involved in the various services have. This is the basic force that generates progress and creates a dynamic society, and this is what Kiryat Gat has."

"I can say with much belief and deep feeling, that many other countries need to emulate this deep passion and pride in building new townships and indeed a proud and purposeful new generation."

These exerpts were taken from the final papers submitted by the participants at the conclusion of the field work at Kiryat Gat.

Kibbutz Bror Hayil

The last week of field work was spent at Kibbutz Bror Hayil, a short distance from Ashkelon. The participants had rooms in the guest house and ate in the collective dining room together with the kibbutz members. The word "kibbutz", which has become synonymous with a particular experiment in voluntary collective rural living, in Israel, always arouses much interest in visitors from abroad, and the participants were glad of the opportunity to learn more about it at close quarters.

The initial introduction to collective life was, appropriately, through the children. On visiting the childrens' houses the participants heard that the children live in those houses from the age of six weeks onwards, in the care of a special child minder. "This system frees the mother to devote herself to her work. During the ample time the mother spends with her children in the afternoons, and on the weekends, she is untroubled by the usual everyday worries of housework and finances." But not all kibbutzim adhere to this mode of life. In some kibbutzim, the children sleep in their parents homes, and spend their days in the childrens' houses. In Bror Hayil, however, the members find the original system very satisfactory. The entire group noted that the childrens' houses were pleasant, cheerful and exceptionally well equipped. The children looked happy, well adjusted, and well cared for.

The childrens' farm was of special interest in the group's tour of the entire kibbutz, including the different agricultural sectors, and the small ceramics factory. The older children work on their farm and assume complete responsibility for it, guided and advised by the adults. They thus learn a great deal about care of animals and the financial aspect entailed.

Lectures and panel discussions were held in the evenings on care and education of children, kibbutz economy and family life. One very enjoyable evening was spent working in arts and crafts with two teachers from the regional school who are members of Bror Hayil. The participants were invited in groups of 2 or 3 to visit some of the members' homes and were impressed by the warmth of their hospitality.

Visits were made to a large potato processing plant, an orange packing house, and to the huge modern laundry which provides service for all the kibbutzim in the area. On the last day at Bror Hayil, the participants experienced the pleasure of orange picking in the kibbutz orchards. The participants were invited in groups of 2 or 3 to visit some of the members' homes, and they were impressed by the warmth of the hospitality offered.

The Sde Boker Negev Regional College - During their observation of this College the participants were told about the comprehensive work of the psychological clinic for the children, families and the communities of 10 kibbutzim, one moshav and one development town in the area. Located in the same complex are the regional school, laboratories, arts and crafts workshops, and a college for adult education, all of which were included in the field visit.

Ofakim Development Town - Two days were spent in this town where the group's interest was focussed on a 4-year educational and community development project that was being implemented. The major aim of the professional staff, that were not residents of Ofakim, was to train as many members of the community as possible to a para-professional standard, to enable them to adapt the project's programmes to the needs of the community, and to activate them. The ultimate aim was to train them to take over, and continue when the professionals would no longer be on the spot.

The project is divided into three parts, described below:

1. The 'Imra' Programme - like the 'Hippy' programme, is based on the premise that the mother is the prime teacher of the child. Women from the community are trained as paraprofessionals to help the mother develop ways of working and playing with her child. They work on the principle of home intervention, and so far their clientelle consists mainly of women who do not hold jobs outside the home.

Unlike the 'Hippy' programme, 'Imra' does not confine itself to the 4-6 age group, but also deals with much younger children. There is less concern with the development of specific concepts (preparatory for school curricula) and more emphasis is placed on the interaction between the mother and the child. The programme is therefore not

strictly structured and is more suited to individual needs of mother and child. The mothers learn how to make didactic games cheaply and how to use them with their children. Mothers who have been through this programme have become used to the idea of themselves as teachers of the child, find it easier to adjust to the demands of the 'Hippy' programme (which also operates in Ofakim), at a later stage.

2. Well-baby clinics and sick clinics (Kupat Holim) - This project has been in operation in Ofakim for 2 years. Play corners, run by a paraprofessional, have been set up in the waiting rooms of the different clinics. Didactic toys, easily made soft toys, books and other written material on various subjects are available (and incidentally, may be had on loan). The paraprofessional in charge advises the mothers how to use them. The idea is to utilize the time (usually wasted in waiting rooms) in order to occupy the children and to educate the mothers. When many children are present, group activities are initiated by the paraprofessional . She may later use her preliminary contact with the mother to establish trust and to begin home visits.

The participants were particularly impressed by the simplicity of this idea. They were all convinced that it would be easy and inexpensive to emulate it in hospitals and clinics in their own countries.

3. Programme for Centres - Special centres have been established to serve the communities in which they are situated. All the staff active in this programme meet for discussion and group instruction once a week; the paraprofessional staff receive an additional 90 minutes of individual instruction per week.

In the mornings there are courses run for mothers entitled "You and Your Child", which include child rearing, and child development. There are weekly sessions in toy making and learning the use of

didactic games. Weekly workshops for kindergarten teachers also take place here. There is room set aside for a resource centre, and much of the material is available on loan.

Mothers who wish to take part in any one of the activities may leave young children in the play corners in the care of a child-minder. In the afternoons, the centre offers activities for children of all ages, and mothers are encouraged to accompany them. The centres are fairly small and very popular with the children, so that they are quite crowded in the afternoons.

To avoid congestion, the course was divided into 2 groups, each visiting a different centre. While observing the children at play, many of the participants established instant communication with them, and joined in their clay modelling, painting, and make-believe activities. During the latter part of the afternoon, the participants answered questions about their countries which the children put to them, and sang their folk songs and danced. The visit ended with community singing.

The 'Matnas' Community Centre is large and attractive and is open to the whole population of Ofakim. "It offers activities for all age groups. The 'Hippy' programme operates in this centre, as do classes in adult education. To allow mothers the freedom to participate in these activities, there is a baby-sitting service. A feature of the centre is a large public library containing books in many languages. Plays, concerts and shows for children are performed monthly."

The participants met with a social worker who deals with the problems of adolescent girls in the community. Also present at the meeting were several young people from neighbouring kibbutzim who received a year's postponement of their army service to allow them to work in the development towns, promoting friendly relationships between the youth of the different cultures.

A newly opened centre for elderly citizens includes a club room for diverse activities (e.g. arts, crafts, lectures and discussions), a communal dining room, and a residential area consisting of individual bungalows.

The visit to Ofakim ended with a meeting between the staff of the project, the paraprofessional workers in the different programmes and the participants. Questions were asked and views exchanged. Finally, the participants were invited to partake of traditional dishes specially prepared for them by the paraprofessionals. As had become customary, the participants expressed their appreciation by singing and dancing, in which their hosts joined, with equal pleasure.

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The course left for Jerusalem, where they were the guests of the Israel Association for International Cooperation, which officiated at the ceremonial award of certificates.

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